

1 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Mr. Ladouceur.

2 MR. LADOUCEUR: Within the next 15 minutes I will  
3 make a comprehensive summary of dozens and dozens of research  
4 that we've conducted over the nearly 20 years at Laval University  
5 on the psychology of gambling. In order to achieve that, I will  
6 share with you our understanding of gambling behavior,  
7 underlining two main points: why do people gamble, and  
8 illustrate the core misbelief of different gamblers. We will  
9 then apply those data to the out-treatment of pathological  
10 gamblers, and I will try to answer those two questions: are  
11 effective treatments available, and if so, are they efficient.  
12 I'll then discuss the prevention program and make some concluding  
13 remarks.

14 Gambling is an activity based on chance, but very  
15 rarely do we define what we mean by chance. Well, if we look in  
16 the dictionary, chance is defined as a unpredictable event or  
17 accidental happening; or random, a brother of chance, is defined  
18 as the method where the selection of samples have an equal  
19 probability of selection. So let's state the definition that  
20 chance is the impossibility of controlling outcomes of an event.

21 Why do people gamble? Well, all surveys will  
22 underline two main reasons. The first one is entertainment, fun,  
23 pleasure, excitement -- some would say to avoid some conflicts.  
24 The second reason is to win money, and in survey, that would be  
25 the first reason. I will strongly argue that winning money is  
26 the prerequisite, the single one condition for entertainment, and  
27 I think we should not undermine this point where winning money is  
28 the most important thing.

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1 But we have a paradox, and the paradox is in all  
2 games the expected return of money invested from the gambler is  
3 always negative. So why is gambling so popular? You know as  
4 much as I do. And why some gamblers, a minority, won't become  
5 pathological gamblers. Well, if I were that paradox, we can say  
6 that in attempting to gain wealth, people engage in an activity  
7 which is expected to decrease wealth on the long-term basis.

8 So why is that? What is the main reason? Well, the  
9 main reason is while most of us -- and I would say if not all --  
10 while we gamble, we mis-perceive the notion of chance and  
11 randomness.

12 Why is that? Well, there are many factors that  
13 contribute to mask these notions. The first one is the active  
14 role played by the individual who gambles. If I gamble and I'm  
15 active at it, it means that I can control the game.

16 Perceived competition: if I'm competing with  
17 someone, the outcome should not be based on chance, beat the  
18 dealer.

19 Frequency of gambling: the more I do an activity,  
20 the better I should be at it. If I play golf, I at least have  
21 the illusion of being better the more I play.

22 Complexity of the game: the more complex a game is,  
23 the more there's something to understanding that game; that's  
24 like a craps game.

25 Well, let me illustrate this by a few examples.  
26 Research has shown that an individual who picked their own  
27 tickets in the lottery would value that ticket much more than if

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1 someone else picked the ticket, and the ratio would be from four  
2 to five more times if you're more active in the process.

3 A study that was conducted recently showed that if  
4 you play roulette and give the opportunity to the player to throw  
5 the ball, the person who is more active will bet significantly  
6 more money because they have the impression that they are active  
7 and can control the outcome of the game.

8 At dice tables, people who need a high number, the  
9 dice will be thrown strongly; if a low number is wanted, the dice  
10 will be thrown softly. We've all played the ladder and the snake  
11 game. If you need a one to play, you will throw your dice  
12 softly, you will not shoot briskly. It seems that is kind of  
13 intuitive. Why is that? When we play roulette, we will analyze  
14 previous numbers and colors before placing our bet.

15 Why is that? Well, research has provided some very  
16 important issues on that. We found that there's one common  
17 denominator among players which is: while gambling, people try  
18 to predict the outcome of the game. And I've defined that this  
19 game is uncontrollable.

20 But how can people do that? And this is probably the  
21 main core of misbelief. When we analyzed what people say to  
22 themselves, we found that 80 percent of their perception of the  
23 games are erroneous. That means they deny the notion of chance  
24 or randomness. And within those perceptions we found one common  
25 denominator: that people are making links between independent  
26 events.

27 Why is that? Why are we doing that? Well, all our  
28 life we were told to take past experience in order to better

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1 perform in the future. Gambling is the only human experience  
2 where we should not do that. Nobody has ever told us that. If  
3 we apply now those results, those data to the treatment of  
4 pathological gamblers, if this misconception towards randomness  
5 is crucial, correcting this factor should help pathological  
6 gamblers.

7 Well, we've conducted a well controlled study where  
8 cognitive correction was the main component, paired with other  
9 different therapeutic ingredients. The methodology was pretty  
10 stringent. Results showed 85 percent success for the treated  
11 patients, and those who were in the control group, only 6 percent  
12 had any success -- that's what we call spontaneous remission.

13 Not only was that treatment effective but it was also  
14 efficient. The average total time for a patient was 16 hours.  
15 We now applied this cognitive treatment in a pilot study -- which  
16 I gave you a copy this morning that was just published two days  
17 ago -- and we had some similar results. We're now conducting a  
18 more controlled study funded by the National Council to evaluate  
19 that treatment and the preliminary results are quite good.

20 If I turn now to prevention, my strong belief is that  
21 gambling is a leisure activity. As any other activity, you must  
22 not gamble more than you can afford. But in order to conduct  
23 prevention, we need two basic principles: the content of the  
24 program must be relevant to gambling, and we must evaluate our  
25 program. That's what we've been doing and I think that will  
26 provide some very good outcomes.

27 Conclusion. We know now much more about the  
28 psychology of gambling than before. I think some good research

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1 has provided some informative data. Effective treatments and  
2 efficient treatments for pathological gamblers are now available.  
3 I'm not saying that all treatment that has been delivered are  
4 necessarily effective, but some are very effective. This  
5 approach is now being applied to the prevention of pathological  
6 gambling and I think we must continue to do good research in this  
7 expanding area.

8 My final remark is gambling is a leisure activity as  
9 any other activity, and we must not gamble more than we can  
10 afford. And if we all worked in that perspective, I'm strongly  
11 convinced that we will all be winners. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you.

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